

To the Distinguished Members of the Appropriation Committee:

As a lifelong resident of Connecticut, a business owner in Glastonbury, a 24 year former elected official in Colchester, and a strong advocate as it relates to agriculture, I would like to express my concern related to a discussion to utilize funds from The Community Investment Act to address the deficit for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2015.

Although my comments are specific to our extremely valuable dairy farms in Connecticut, all major programs grouped under open space, historic preservation, affordable housing, and agriculture are critical to the well being of our State and our residents. As you know, The Community Investment Act has funded 1100 projects in 168 towns for a total of \$133 million given back to Connecticut. This is based on a \$40 real estate recording fee. Not even a tax. In my opinion, this program has evolved into the most effective use of our money as compared to any program that we have out there.

In 2009, The Department of Economic and Community Development and the Department of Agriculture, along with The University of Connecticut, conducted a study titled "The Economic and Fiscal Impacts of Connecticut's Dairy Industry. Contained in that study were alarming statistics showing that the number of dairy farms were reduced from approximately 500 to 210 from 1990-2007. This was mainly due to economics. As the federal government sets milk prices per 100 pounds of milk, when federal prices dip below the cost of milk production, our dairy farming industry suffers as does all their employees. Back in 2008 or 2009, a local TV station ran a story citing our dairy cows as "endangered species" because dairy farms were going out of business at such a high rate.

Approximately 5 million dollars a year is given to the Department of Agriculture through the Community Investment Act. A portion of that money is given to our dairy farms to sustain operations under Dairy Support as a safety net when farms are operating at a deficit because federal prices are below production costs. Our current dairy farms that have survived generate 1.1 billion dollars into our economy annually.

Currently, for April 2015, the federal "Boston Blend" rate is \$16.53 per 100 pounds of milk (approximately 12 gallons). Cost of production varies as in any business, roughly between \$18.00-\$22.00. UConn actually has a study showing that it can be as high as \$30.00 per 100 pounds.

I strongly urge the Appropriations Committee to consider the importance of The Community Investment Act in sustaining and improving the lives of our citizens and the well being of our State. Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

William Hettrick
Colchester, CT